



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Transportation
Grace Crunican, Director

May 27th, 2004

Ms. Allison Ray
WSDOT Environmental Coordinator
Alaskan Way Viaduct Project
999 Third Ave. Ste. 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Ray:

The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board (SPAB) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Alaskan Way Viaduct project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). It is our conviction that the Elliott Bay waterfront holds for the City of Seattle and indeed the entire State of Washington, a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on our natural and creative resources to develop urban space that will support regional transportation needs in a way that bolsters, rather than hinders, development of community and continuity in that locale.

As such it seems appropriate to begin by reiterating the principals that SPAB has supported throughout the planning phases of this project:

- ◆ Create an excellent pedestrian facility separated from bicycle and motorized vehicular traffic along Seattle's Elliott Bay waterfront
- ◆ Landscaping, adjacency to transit and to thriving businesses are the keys to a pedestrian-oriented waterfront serving both tourists and the stakeholders of Seattle
- ◆ Improve visual access to, and the aural environment of, the waterfront
- ◆ Increase east-west connections between Cascade/South Lake Union and Uptown
- ◆ Mitigate raised portions of 99 entering Battery Street Tunnel and south of downtown by activating the space below them
- ◆ Any usage of access roads in any alignment should de-emphasize auto usage of the access roads by making them feel like pedestrian space
- ◆ Activate medians with pedestrian facilities such as transit stops and kiosks
- ◆ Incorporate Blue Ring planning concepts

SPAB also fully supports Seattle's Central Waterfront Plan and advises the project team to keep the plan's workbook in mind as the viaduct options are reviewed. Please contact Dennis Meier at DPD for a complete copy of the document.

Regarding the DEIS document, generally speaking we find it lacking in its efforts to address specific details related to the pedestrian environment. We urge that factors such as quality and character of medians and sidewalks be addressed in full and specific detail in the main body of the

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forthcoming final EIS. Of equally great importance is the fact that the creation of suitable pedestrian amenities cannot fall to the wayside in the case of funding shortfalls or unforeseen costs. SPAB feels strongly that the final DEIS must clearly indicate agency responsibility and existence of funds.

The following are additions we see necessary to meeting the needs of the pedestrian viewpoint in this document:

- ◆ Construction impacts: Section 10.9 notes that new pedestrian routes will have to be established to replace the Waterfront Trail, but declines to name the new routes until the preferred alternative is chosen. Section 10.10 mentions the barrier effect the construction will have on the mindset of pedestrians, but again the DEIS is not specific about the nature of the "temporary sidewalks or other routes" mentioned. Construction will last several years and identifying the new or temporary routes is critical to the choice of alternatives.
- ◆ Transit impacts including alternate (trolley) transportation: SPAB would like to see a detailed plan for the re-routing of transit resources in the area. The DEIS states that route changes for buses and the trolley will occur during construction, but we believe these route changes are important and will be in place for a while, so they should be detailed.
- ◆ Accommodating those with Disabilities: SPAB would like to see a commitment from the project team to implementing wherever possible proven methods to augment and improve the pedestrian environment for those with disabilities. The project team has an excellent opportunity to make the Elliott Bay waterfront a premier space for pedestrians of all abilities, and while best practices guidelines may not yet exist for some innovations in pedestrian signalization, we believe such a commitment should be clearly delineated in future documents.
- ◆ Pedestrian Promenade Zone: It is the position of SPAB that the pedestrian area described in the surface road section of every alternative is lacking both in detail and in pedestrian orientation for a highly used downtown pedestrian corridor. SPAB urges the project to view the entire area between the edge of the right of way and the edge of the roadway as belonging to the pedestrian zone. This includes any access roads, parking, and dedicated streetcar lanes.
- ◆ It must be abundantly clear that pedestrians come at the top of the hierarchy in this zone, followed by transit, and vehicles. The appropriate atmosphere can be created by making the zone all one level and providing amenities to ensure that the frontage road discourages vehicle speeds over 20 miles per hour, allowing for safe and free movement of pedestrians in that area. SPAB asks that this area be addressed in significantly more detail in the final EIS.
- ◆ Crossing treatments: As the six-lane roadway proposed for the surface treatment of all alternatives creates more hazardous conditions for pedestrians than currently exist today, SPAB believes mitigation, and detailed explanation of that mitigation is essential. While the document in many instances mentions that crossings will exist, the nature of the crossings is not specified. We suggest that a raised crosswalk be used at intersections to create, in fact and in feel, a safe transition for pedestrians through the highway atmosphere into the pedestrian zone. Crossing hierarchy should be identified in the plan for the preferred alternative.

Finally, considering the enormous cost of the project, and the decade it will take to be built, SPAB strongly supports selection of an alternative that gives our city and our state the greatest value for generations to come.

Please continue to consider SPAB a resource for informed citizen opinion regarding AWRP planning.

Sincerely,



Amy Clark
Secretary
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board